

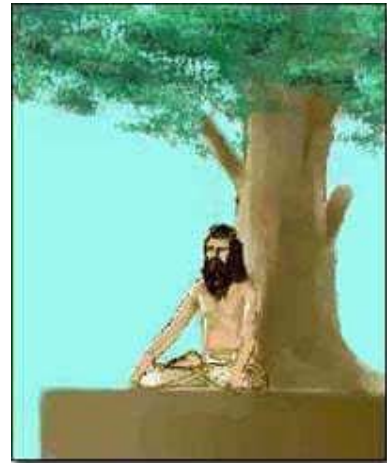
## Sannyasa – Renunciation

**At this stage a Hindu turns away from the world completely to become as close as possible to Brahman. They break all ties with family and friends and give up (renounce) all property and wealth.**

### Sacrificing the trivial in order to attain the highest

The *sannyasa ashrama* is the fourth and final phase in life and traditionally begins at the end of the *vanaprastha ashrama*. The lifestyle of a renunciate can however be adopted at *any age* or *any stage in life*

when the individual feels a strong urge for making spiritual progress. In earlier times, a *sannyasi*, a person in the *sannyasa ashrama*, would leave his home and family and become a monk. Traditionally, he does not keep any possessions with him except a small water vessel and a staff.



The word renunciation is often misunderstood. The monk is only renouncing 'less significant worldly goals' in order to attain a 'higher goal' i.e. God. The monk gives up his small family so that he can look upon the whole world as his family.

### Relevance today

The two aims promoted at this stage of life are *moksha*, striving for liberation from the cycle of rebirth, and service to mankind. As *Swami Ramdas* said: "God realisation is not getting away from the world but looking upon it as a manifestation of God and serving Him in all creatures and beings".

### The process

This stage of life is especially noted in Hinduism. It requires the complete giving up of all worldly ties and possessions and devoting one's entire life to the spiritual goal of liberation or *moksha*. Some sannyasins become wandering holy men with no fixed abode and spend their whole life on pilgrimage in prayer, meditation and the study of the scriptures. Not many Hinds enter this stage but it is regarded very highly as a holy and spiritual way of life.